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ON NON-HEBREW LANGUAGES USED BY
JEWS.

On the Languages used by the Jews with Transcription in Hebrew characters, and the Glossarium Græco-Hebraicum oder der griechische Wörtlertschatz der jüdischen Midraschwerke, Ein Beitrag zur Kultur- und Alterthumskunde. Von DR. JULIUS FÜRST, Rabbiner, Strassburg. (Trübner, 1890-91.) 4 fasciculi.

THE Jews, although holding fast to the Hebrew language, and even considering it as holy, easily adapted themselves to the languages spoken by the nations among which they were exiled, or had voluntarily emigrated. First of all they brought from the Babylonian exile the Aramaic language, which was current in Palestine during the period of the Second Temple, together with the modified Hebrew dialect, found in the Mishnah and in the Midrashim. The ruling class, however, understood Aramaic already in the time of Hezekiah (Isaiah xxxvi. 11), since this language was used in the chancelleries throughout the East. Next comes the Greek, which entered Jewish society, not universally however, through the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great; it was spread by his successors, it could not be rooted out completely by the jealous Maccabees, and it was finally revived by the Roman rule. The Jews who settled in Alexandria, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Greece, and Italy seem even to have forgotten their Hebrew in the second or third generation after Alexander to such an extent that the Pentateuch had to be translated for them in a Greek translation which goes under the name of the Septuagint. These Jews composed in Greek,

Apocryphal writings, dramas, apologetical, historical and philosophical works. We shall only mention the second Book of the Maccabees and the Book of Wisdom, Ezekiëlos, the Sybilline books, Pseudo-Phokylides, Justus of Tiberias, Josephus, and Philo. As to Asia Minor, we know little concerning the Jews there, but it is certain that St. Paul wrote in Greek, and the Jewish (?) epitaphs found there are also composed in that language. Latin seems not to have been favoured by the Jews in Italy, for we find no Latin writing even mentioned by the Jews, except in some epitaphs in Southern Italy. From recent investigations, mostly made by Dr. Perles, we are certain that Jews assisted in the Syriac translation of many books of the Old Testament, and they transcribed Syriac with Hebrew characters, as, for instance, the history of Bel and the Dragon. (See the Book of Tobit, Oxford, 1881, p. 37.) As to Persian, the numerous Persian words found in the Babylonian Talmud would already prove that the Jews were writing in this language, but the fact is rendered certain by the two translations of the Bible, an old one, now lost, and another of the fourteenth century, which still exists in MS., and in which many old Pahlavi forms are to be found. From glosses in these MSS., where passages are marked, according to the Talmud (for instance, Genesis xxv. 22), which should not be read in translation, we may conclude that the Persian translation was read in the synagogues. Amongst these MSS. are also some Apocrypha in Persian, in Hebrew characters, among which the history of Daniel has been lately published by Prof. James Darmestetter. The British Museum possesses a MS. of Biblical history composed in Firdausi verses, as well as astronomical and medical treatises in Judæo-Persian. In the Imperial Library of St. Petersburg an Hebraico-Talmudic dictionary, with a Persian explanation, is to be found. Some years ago Mr. Sidney Churchill, of the British Embassy at Teheran, was kind enough to present us with a MS. which contains transcripts in

Hebrew characters of Persian poets, as well as original verses in Persian by Judah ben M[ar] Eleazar כחשי, headed כהאב המהאל נאמה, Book of Parables, one of which gives a description of Moses (פי נעת משה רבינו ע"ה). In the year 1883 a Persian translation of the Psalms was printed in Hebrew characters at Vienna for the use of the Jews in Bokhara. It is superfluous to speak about Arabic, which the Jews in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, the Magreb and Spain freely substituted for Aramaic, when Islâm conquered those countries. All branches of learning were written and are still written in Arabic, even *Halakhah*, and commentaries on the Mishnah and Talmud. The same is the case in Yemen and in North Arabia, where celebrated poets were Jews, who wrote in classical Arabic and in Arabic characters.

Now we come to the Western countries. In Christian Spain the Jews wrote freely in Spanish and Portuguese, not only on Biblical subjects, but also on branches of science. Readers may find details about these works in Dr. Kayserling's *Bibliotheca Española-Portuguesa-Judaica*, 1890. In Spain we find R. Santob (Shem Tob) de Carrion, called also Rabbi Don Santo, as one of the earliest troubadors. Ethical sayings in Catalan, by Jafuda (Jeheu de Barcelona, thirteenth century), were lately published in the *Revista Catalana*, January, 1889. In Provence, not only glosses are found in the vernacular, but also original poems and prose works, for instance, that by Israel Caslari, of Avignon, a history of Esther in verse to be read on the day of Purim. This poem exists in a unique MS., at present at least, in possession of the Rev. Chief Rabbi, Dr. H. Adler; it is unfortunately incomplete. As to French, the earliest documents written in old French are the 2,500 glosses of Rashi (eleventh century), scattered throughout his commentaries to the Bible and the Talmud. They were collected and collated with all available MSS. by our lamented friend Arsene Darmestetter. Alas, his premature death will retard this important publication. Rashi was fol-

lowed by Joseph Qara, Samuel ben Meir, generally called Rashbam, Eliezer of Beaugency, and the Thosaphists to the Bible and the Talmud, which all employ French glosses. In controversial treatises, for instance, by Joseph the Zelote, French sentences and words occur in abundance. Moses ben Isaac, of England, usually called Moses of London, whom we have now to place towards the end of the twelfth century (see JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, II., pp. 322, 330, and 520; III., p. 778), gives in his Hebrew dictionary, the Book of Onyx (ס' השפה), not only French glosses, but also French sentences and proverbs. It is not certain whether Hagin, the translator into French of Abraham ibn Ezra's astrological works, made in the year 1273 in the house of the astronomer, Henry Bate, at Malines, in Belgium, was an Englishman, and whether he is also the translator into Hebrew of the *Image du Monde* (see *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, t. xxvii., p. 507, *sqq.*; Mr. Joseph Jacob's essay on the London Jewry, p. 401, and Dr. H. Adler's paper on the Chief Rabbis in England, p. 270, both of which appeared in the *Papers read at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, 1887). Berechiah, the punctator, who lived in England before 1190, or, according to Mr. Jacobs (see JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, II., p. 331), was even a permanent resident at Oxford, has also French glosses in his Hebrew translation of the *Quæstiones Naturales* of Adelhard, of Bath, and in that of the treatise on precious stones (*Lapidarium*). Strangely enough we find no English writings in Hebrew characters, not even glosses, a fact which can only be explained by the reason that Jewish learning was here cultivated by Rabbis who came from France, or by disciples of French Talmudic schools; besides, the court language in England at that time was French. Whether whole treatises were written in French in Hebrew characters cannot be said with certainty. No French translation of the Bible in Hebrew characters is known at present. The fact that French liturgies were recited in the synagogues, is made evident by the elegy on the Auto-da-fé of Troyes in 1288,

by Jacob, son of Judah of Lorraine, so well interpreted by the lamented Arsène Darmestetter (*Romania*, t. iii., p. 443 *sqq.*, and *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, t. xxvii., p. 475 *sqq.*), which was found in a Mahazor in a MS. of the Vatican Library. We know that the Rabbis in Lorraine were opposed to the reading of romances by the Jews, which seems to have been a universal custom, and probably they were transcribed in Hebrew characters. Possibly some adaptations or imitations were made by the Jews, though no traces of any have been found as yet.

In Germany, where the Jews settled as early as in Spain and Gaul, we find German glosses as far back as the twelfth century by Eliezer ben Nathan, Eleazar of Worms, and others (see *Revue des Etudes Juives*, t. v., p. 142). About the beginning of the thirteenth century we find the Jew Süßkind of Trimberg, one of the *Minnesänger*. Judaico-German literature abounds in copies in Hebrew characters of romances, popular songs, and original adaptations of them (see Steinschneider's essay *Jüdisch-Deutsche Literatur* in the *Serapeum*, 1848-1849.) In the later period we find Judaico-German treatises of all kinds on the Bible, sermons, ethical treatises, books on medicine and mathematics. Many of them are in the corrupted jargon of the Polish Jews, who settled in Poland when exiled from Germany.

In Italy, where the Jews were the least persecuted, we find, strangely enough, few Judaico-Italian writings. Excepting Emmanuel ben Solomon of Rome (according to recent investigations he was the friend of Dante), who wrote some poetry in Italian under the name of Manuello, we can only mention Azariah de Rossi and some minor poets, who are represented by the literature in the defence or condemnation of women. In Southern Italy we shall see that Greek long prevailed; it was superseded in Sicily by Arabic when Islâm conquered that island.

The following languages are omitted among Judaico-vernacular writings:—They are English, the Slavonic

family, the Roumanian dialect, the Hungarian, and the Turkish. Of the first we have already spoken (p. 12). As to the next, the Jews settled comparatively late in Slav-speaking countries, and they kept to German, which they brought with them, and considered holy to such an extent that they continued their casuistic and other writings in German. Besides, they were treated in such a way by the people and the respective Governments that they were utterly excluded from all society, and it was not worth while for them to trouble about the official language. Most likely, also, the scanty amount of literature in the Slavonic dialects, in Roumanian, and in Hungarian, was not to the taste of the Jews, and was, therefore, neglected by them. In Turkey the case was the same; the Spanish immigrants were either Arabic speaking Jews or exiles from Spain, who continued, and still continue, the use of Spanish. We must, however, mention that the Karaites of the Crimea possess a translation of the Bible and liturgies in the Tshagatai dialect written with Hebrew characters. Only after admission to citizenship have the Jews adopted the language of their respective countries. Such was the case in Holland, where Portuguese is entirely forgotten now; in England, where Spanish and Portuguese were still used even in the last century; and in France, before 1789, where Spanish and German were predominant amongst the Jews.

Let us now return to the Greek. It is not yet certain how far the Greek language entered into Jewish life in Jerusalem and other great centres in Palestine. It is most likely that in Jerusalem the three languages, Mishnaic-Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, were spoken; there was a synagogue of Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem and in the country. But it is doubtful whether the bulk of the Jews could or did speak Greek (see *Studia Biblica*, Oxford, Vol. I., p. 65, *sqq.*). Certain it is that Greek terms were adopted for certain objects which were newly introduced into Palestine. This we can see from the Mishnah, a part of

which we can trace to the first century before the Christian era. In the Palestinian Gemara Greek words and even sentences are numerous, and in the various Midrashim we meet frequently with Greek locutions. The preacher or interpreter even plays upon words from Greek to Hebrew, and *vice versâ*, by which he explains Biblical passages. We shall give one instance only: Genesis xxxv. 8, the words אֵלֶּן בְּכוֹר, "Oak of Weeping," is explained in the Pesiqta by "a second weeping," meaning that soon after Jacob heard of the death of Deborah, he had another weeping or mourning through the death of his mother. Here the preacher plays upon the word אֵלֶּן "oak," taking it as the Greek word ἄλλον "another." To understand such plays upon words, the audience must necessarily have been acquainted with Greek. R. Abahu (third century) freely makes use of such puns at Cæsarea. Now the date of the Midrashim lay between 200 B.C. to 800 and even 900 C.E., and they were composed or compiled not only in Palestine, but also in Byzantine countries, among which we have to count Southern Italy and Sicily. Naturally, the Greek underwent modifications in different ages and provinces.

And here we have to follow Dr. Fürst's excellent remarks. He says, that from the fact that in Constantinople Latin was spoken whilst the surrounding country at the time of its foundation by Constantine spoke Greek, a mixed dialect necessarily sprang up. The meaning of Latin words taken over into Greek, and *vice versâ*, changed through the translation of them. The Midrash, when employing Greek words, does so according to the popular usage, and consequently the dates of the various Midrashim could approximately be given through the meaning of the Greek words the preachers make use of. If, therefore, words have their history, the books in which they are employed have similarly their history. We quote one of Dr. Fürst's instances to show how the Aggadist employed terms of dignity for his purpose of preaching to his audience, terms which have lost their classical meaning, and possess that of the time

when the preacher employed them. We find in the *Midrash Tanhuma*, sectio בהעלותך § 20 (editio Buber, Numbers, p. 55) the following saying: R. Abba said, When I saw a crowd of men, I went in the opposite direction, so that I should not trouble them by making them stand up and greet me. R. Yose said to him, Quite the contrary ought to have been done, for showing their respect to you will teach them the fear of God, as it is written (Lev. xix. 32), "Thou shalt rise before the hoary head and honour the face of an old man, and thou shalt fear thy God." Indeed, pious men ought not to lower their dignity. Esau (Byzantium), however, is always going down, so that to-day he is a prefect (איפרכוס, ἑπαρχος), and to-morrow he will be a common man (פגן, παγανός, which is the right reading; the word stands corrupted in previous editions into סגן); to-day (Dr. Fürst rightly accepts היום instead of למחר) he is a commander (קומוס, i.e., κόμης), to-morrow he will be a private soldier (סרדיוס, στρατιώτης). פגן is here not a rustic, but a private man; the saying would be more emphatic if we take παγανός in the sense of a degraded soldier.

In the following sentence, which has also a historical ground, the word פגן certainly means a private person. We read in the *Bereshith Rabba*, § 50, the following:—משל לאחד שנטל הגמוניה מן המלך • עד שלא הגיע למיתורין שלו היה מהלך כפגן כיון שהגיע למיתורין שלו היה מהלך כקלמון. "It resembles one who receives the offices of a prefect of a province (ἡγεμονία), who until he reaches the boundary of his province travels as a private man (παγανός); as soon as he reaches the boundary he travels as a high official (κάλλιμος?)." This reminds us, Dr. Fürst says rightly, of the edict promulgated by Augustus (Dio Cassius, liii. 13), that a prefect should not assume his insignia before he reaches the boundary of his province, a rule which continued most probably under the reign of Augustus' successors. We shall adduce one example in which Dr. Fürst proposes some happy emendations for Greek

words which copyists through their ignorance of the language have corrupted. For instance, the word *איסקבטירי* (*Jer. Tal. Kilaim*, IX., fol. 32c) is the same as *איסקריטורי* in the parallel passage (*Jer. T. Kethuboth*, XII., fol. 35c), for both represent the Greek *σεκρητάριοι*, and not the Latin *scriptores* as given by Levy, although explained in *B. T. Sukkah*, fol. 35a, by *סופרים*. A more corrupt, nay, unintelligible form we find in the *Midrash Qoheleth*, ix. 18 (towards the end of the chapter), where we read *סקיווי פטרי* applied to Shebna the scribe (*הסופר*, Isaiah xxxvi. 3). However, here we confess the corruption from *סקריפטור* is less than from *איסקריטורי*, and if so the above-mentioned word would probably also represent the Latin *scriptor*, as Levy proposed. In such a case only MSS. readings must decide; therefore, before venturing on emendations, all help from MSS. and early printed texts must be exhausted.

Doubtful, although ingenious, is the emendation proposed by Dr. Fürst, to read *לגטון*, for *לביון* (*Pesiqtha* xxviii., fol. 182a). It is said there that once a legion passed to take the taxes of a province. That would be the only passage in which *ληγάτος* would be used in the Midrashic literature. Perhaps it would be better to understand the word "commander of a legion," as Levy does rightly. *לגטון* usually means a legacy, *i.e.*, a will.

Although Dr. Fürst cites but few books, since he had no great libraries at his disposal, his glossary will prove an important contribution to the solution of Greek words in Midrashic literature. Additional help is given in Kohut's excellent edition of the *Arukh* of R. Nathan; Levy's exhaustive dictionary; Professor Bacher's remarkable book, *Die Agadah der Tannaiten*; the late Mosé Lattes's *Saggio*, unfortunately left unfinished by the premature death of this able rabbi; Dr. Jastrow's dictionary, which advances too slowly; and many other attempts. Perhaps the time will soon come when we shall have a complete Judæo-Greek vocabulary, brought up to the present level of philology

by a Talmudic scholar in conjunction with a Greek philologist.

These various dictionaries and monographs show that the Jews in Greek countries and even at Rome knew Greek in the eleventh century. There remains also a Greek translation in the Corfu dialect of the Haftarah of the Day of Atonement, viz., of the Book of Jonah. This was no doubt read publicly in the synagogue, since it is found in a Corfu Mahazor in a Hebrew text, and each verse is followed by the Greek translation, both being provided with vowel points (MSS. in the Bodleian and the Bologna Libraries). A critical edition of the Greek is in preparation by Professor Jean Psichari in Paris. Karaite writers, and more especially Judah Hadassi in his *אשכל הכופר* (written in the year 1148), constantly use Greek words and sentences. Our friend Dr. Harkavy has lately sent us an elegy of nineteen lines probably used for the ninth of Ab, in Greek, in Hebrew characters also provided with vowel points. It is to be found in a MS. of the fifteenth or sixteenth century, perhaps even older, headed by the following words (folio 45a) *מרולויין רומיקון פרפוניטיקון פולא* (*Μυρολόγιον Ῥωμαϊκὸν παραφωνητικὸν πολλά* (?), transliteration suggested by Dr. Léopold Cohn, of Breslau), which, we hope, will soon be published.

There are many hymns in Greek in Hebrew characters to be found in MS. (see Catalogue of Hebrew MSS. in the Bodleian Library, Nos. 2,501, 2,503, 2,504, and elsewhere). Some hymns used at Corfu even now have been published lately by M. Sp. Papageorgios in the *Abhandlungen des 5ten internationalen Orientalisten Congresses*, Berlin, 1882, p. 225 sqq.

Finally, we possess a Greek translation of the Pentateuch printed at Constantinople, 1547, and one of Job, ibidem 1576. (See Steinschneider, *Catalogus Librorum Hebr. in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, Nos. 122 and 241, and M. Lazare Belléli's article with the title of "Une version grecque du Pentateuque du seizième siècle" in the *Revue des Etudes*

Grecques, iii., p. 289 *sqq.*) The publication of a complete vocabulary of Judæo-Greek from the time of the earliest Mishnah down to our time would be useful not only for the Greek dialects, since it is well-known that the Jews with their natural conservatism kept to old forms, but would also be of some advantage for the study of the Septuagint as well as of the New Testament books written or influenced by Jews.

A. NEUBAUER.